Sūrah Sajdah

Central Theme of the Sūrah and Relationship with the Previous Sūrah

This *sūrah* is the counterpart of Sūrah Luqmān, the previous *sūrah*. There is no basic difference between the central themes of the two. Both share the same Qur'ānic name: Alif Lām Mīm. Both have similar introductory sections. Sūrah Sajdah begins with the statement that this Book has been revealed by God. By revealing it to the unlettered Arabs, the Almighty has done a great favour to them, as no warner had as yet come to them. They would be extremely ungrateful if, instead of giving it due importance, they claim that it has been falsely proclaimed as the Book of God; there is not the slightest doubt in it being the Book of God. After that, the discourse proceeds to validate the claims of the Qur'ān which were specially causing alarm in the minds of the opponents. At the end, the Torah is referred to by stating that a book similar to the Qur'ān was revealed to Moses (sws) which was opposed by the Pharaoh and his people and a very evil fate of this came before them. After this, the Prophet Muḥammad (sws) is assured that just as the bearers of the Torah achieved success after passing through many phases of patience, in a similar manner, he and his followers too will have to pass through some phases in which their patience will be tested. If they are successful in these phases, the ultimate victory will be theirs and his opponents will be humiliated.

Analysis of the Discourse

Verses (1-3): It is asserted that the Qur'ān is the Book of God; there is not the slightest doubt in this fact. Those who think that it has been falsely ascribed to God should be informed that it is the truth from God and its purpose is to warn those who as yet have not seen the likes of a warner. If they do not duly value it, their fate will be the

same as that of the earlier nations to whom God had sent warners.

Verses (4-9): It is stated that this world is not a place of amusement. The Almighty has made it in a very elaborate manner, and has not been left it unattended. He is directly controlling it. All directives emanate from Him and all consequences of these directives are reported back to Him. No one is His partner or intercessor. He has knowledge of all the Seen and the Unseen. He has created man with the best of qualities but very few benefit from these qualities and stay thankful to God.

Verses (10-14): The doubts raised by the rejecters of the Day of Judgement are responded to and the real reason of their rejection is referred to. Their fate on the Day of Judgement is depicted. It is stated that a confession of sins by people will be of no avail to them on that day. If faith was acceptable once a person observes the realities on which faith was to be professed, then the Almighty would have created every person on faith. What would then be the need to give him the faculties of intellect and of the awareness between good and evil?

Verses (15-22): Some traits of the people who will profess faith in the Qur'ān are referred to: those who are devoid of arrogance and value the truth will profess faith in it. These people bow their heads when they hear the verses of the Qur'ān, invoke God at various portions of the night and spend for His cause. No one can even imagine the comfort of the eyes which the Almighty has as yet concealed from them. The Almighty will not deal in the same manner with those obedient to Him and those who are disobedient to Him. These defiant will not only be punished in the Hereafter, they will also be punished in this world so that they are given an opportunity to take heed.

Verses (23-26): The Prophet (sws) is assured that before him the Almighty bestowed His Book on Moses (sws) as well. He punished those who rejected it. In a similar way, He will definitely take revenge from those who reject this Book, and just as from among the Israelites he bestowed leadership on those who persevered on the truth, in a similar manner He will bestow leadership on the companions of the Prophet (sws) if they strongly adhere to the truth. A brief reference is then made to the history of the Prophets of God and their nations to prove what is just stated, only if people have eyes to see and ears to hear.

Verses (27-30): The disbelievers are threatened that they regard the glad tidings of dominance given to the believers as very far-fetched and out of jest ask about the time of this triumph. They are told that whenever it does, professing faith in it will be of no avail to these people who are making fun of it today. The Prophet (sws) is directed to ignore such indiscreet elements: if these people are waiting for the Day of Judgement, then he should stop going after them and wait for it.

Section I: Verses (1-14)

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

الٓمّٓ ﴿۱﴾ تَنۡزِیۡلُ الۡکِتٰبِ لَا رَیۡبَ فِیۡہِ مِنۡ رَّبِّ الۡعٰلَمِیۡنَ ﴿۲﴾ اَمۡ یَقُوۡلُوۡنَ افۡتَرٰىہُ ۚ بَلۡ ہُوَ الۡحَقُّ مِنۡ رَّبِّکَ
لِتُنۡذِرَ قَوۡمًا مَّاۤ اَتٰىہُمۡ مِّنۡ نَّذِیۡرٍ مِّنۡ قَبۡلِکَ لَعَلَّہُمۡ یَہۡتَدُوۡنَ ﴿۳﴾ اَللّٰہُ الَّذِیۡ خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ الۡاَرۡضَ وَ مَا
بَیۡنَہُمَا فِیۡ سِتَّۃِ اَیَّامٍ ثُمَّ اسۡتَوٰی عَلَی الۡعَرۡشِ ؕ مَا لَکُمۡ مِّنۡ دُوۡنِہٖ مِنۡ وَّلِیٍّ وَّ لَا شَفِیۡعٍ ؕ اَفَلَا تَتَذَکَّرُوۡنَ ﴿۴﴾
یُدَبِّرُ الۡاَمۡرَ مِنَ السَّمَآءِ اِلَی الۡاَرۡضِ ثُمَّ یَعۡرُجُ اِلَیۡہِ فِیۡ یَوۡمٍ کَانَ مِقۡدَارُہٗۤ اَلۡفَ سَنَۃٍ مِّمَّا تَعُدُّوۡنَ ﴿۵﴾ ذٰلِکَ عٰلِمُ
الۡغَیۡبِ وَ الشَّہَادَۃِ الۡعَزِیۡزُ الرَّحِیۡمُ ﴿۶﴾ الَّذِیۡۤ اَحۡسَنَ کُلَّ شَیۡءٍ خَلَقَہٗ وَ بَدَاَ خَلۡقَ الۡاِنۡسَانِ مِنۡ طِیۡنٍ ﴿۷﴾ ثُمَّ
جَعَلَ نَسۡلَہٗ مِنۡ سُلٰلَۃٍ مِّنۡ مَّآءٍ مَّہِیۡنٍ ﴿۸﴾ ثُمَّ سَوّٰىہُ وَ نَفَخَ فِیۡہِ مِنۡ رُّوۡحِہٖ وَ جَعَلَ لَکُمُ السَّمۡعَ وَ الۡاَبۡصَارَ وَ
الۡاَفۡـِٕدَۃَ ؕ قَلِیۡلًا مَّا تَشۡکُرُوۡنَ ﴿۹﴾ وَ قَالُوۡۤا ءَاِذَا ضَلَلۡنَا فِی الۡاَرۡضِ ءَاِنَّا لَفِیۡ خَلۡقٍ جَدِیۡدٍ ؕ بَلۡ ہُمۡ بِلِقَآیِٔ
رَبِّہِمۡ کٰفِرُوۡنَ ﴿۱۰﴾ قُلۡ یَتَوَفّٰىکُمۡ مَّلَکُ الۡمَوۡتِ الَّذِیۡ وُکِّلَ بِکُمۡ ثُمَّ اِلٰی رَبِّکُمۡ تُرۡجَعُوۡنَ ﴿۱۱﴾ وَ لَوۡ تَرٰۤی اِذِ
الۡمُجۡرِمُوۡنَ نَاکِسُوۡا رُءُوۡسِہِمۡ عِنۡدَ رَبِّہِمۡ ؕ رَبَّنَاۤ اَبۡصَرۡنَا وَ سَمِعۡنَا فَارۡجِعۡنَا نَعۡمَلۡ صَالِحًا اِنَّا مُوۡقِنُوۡنَ ﴿۱۲﴾ وَ لَوۡ
شِئۡنَا لَاٰتَیۡنَا کُلَّ نَفۡسٍ ہُدٰىہَا وَ لٰکِنۡ حَقَّ الۡقَوۡلُ مِنِّیۡ لَاَمۡلَـَٔنَّ جَہَنَّمَ مِنَ الۡجِنَّۃِ وَ النَّاسِ اَجۡمَعِیۡنَ ﴿۱۳﴾
فَذُوۡقُوۡا بِمَا نَسِیۡتُمۡ لِقَآءَ یَوۡمِکُمۡ ہٰذَا ۚ اِنَّا نَسِیۡنٰکُمۡ وَ ذُوۡقُوۡا عَذَابَ الۡخُلۡدِ بِمَا کُنۡتُمۡ تَعۡمَلُوۡنَ ﴿۱۴﴾

This is Alif Lām Mīm. The revelation of this Book is undoubtedly from the Lord of the Universe. Do they say: "He has fabricated it himself and ascribed it to God?" In fact, it is the truth from your Lord so that you may warn a people to whom no warner came before you that they may be rightly guided. (1-3)

It was God who created the heavens and the earth and all that lies

between them in six days, and then ascended the throne. You have no guardian or intercessor besides Him. Will you not take heed? (4)

He governs all affairs from the heavens to the earth. Then all these affairs return to Him in a day which is equivalent to a thousand years by your reckoning. He knows the unknown and the manifest. He is the Mighty One, the Ever Merciful. (5-6)

He who excelled in whatever He created. He began creating man with clay. Then carried forth his offspring from the essence of a trivial fluid. Then He perfected him and breathed His spirit into him and made for you ears, eyes and hearts – yet you are seldom grateful. (7-9)

And they say: "Once We are lost into the earth, shall we be created again?" In fact, these people deny meeting their Lord. Say: "The angel of death deputed to you claims your souls. Then to your Lord shall you be returned." And would that you were able to see these wrongdoers when they bowing their heads before their Lord would confess: "Lord! We have seen and we have heard; send us back so that we can do good deeds. Now we are convinced." Had it been Our will, We could have given every soul its guidance. But My word shall be fulfilled: "I will surely fill Hell with jinn and humans all." So, taste the flavour of this that you kept in oblivion the gathering of this day. We too have ignored you, and you will now taste eternal punishment for what you did. (10-14)

Explanation

الٓمّٓ ﴿١﴾ تَنْزِيْلُ الْكِتٰبِ لَا رَيْبَ فِيْهِ مِنْ رَّبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿٢﴾[1]

Research on الٓمّٓ has already been presented in Sūrah Baqarah. It may be kept in mind that like the previous *sūrah*, the introductory verses of this *sūrah* as well resemble as those of Sūrah Baqarah.

It has been explained at another place that the word تَنْزِيْل does not mean merely to reveal but to reveal gradually in an elaborate way. The word الْكِتٰبِ refers to the Qur'ān. In other words, this Book has been gradually revealed in an elaborate way by the Almighty. The words لَا رَيْبَ فِيْهِ express that there is no doubt in the fact that it has been revealed by the Almighty. It is this very meaning of لَا رَيْبَ فِيْهِ that

1. This is Alif Lām Mīm. The revelation of this Book is undoubtedly from the Lord of the Universe.

I have stated in Sūrah Baqarah. This verse substantiates this meaning. The greatest difference of opinion which the Quraysh and the Jews had was with this claim of the Prophet Muḥammad (sws) that this Book was being revealed from the Almighty. They would regard this claim as اِفْتِرَاء, as will be evident from the next verse. In other words, they would accuse the Prophet (sws) of concocting the Qur'ān and would assert that in order to force his ideas on them he is falsely ascribes it to the Almighty

اَمْ يَقُوْلُوْنَ افْتَرٰىهُ ۚ بَلْ هُوَ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَّبِّكَ لِتُنْذِرَ قَوْمًا مَّآ اَتٰىهُمْ مِّنْ نَّذِيْرٍ مِّنْ قَبْلِكَ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَهْتَدُوْنَ ۝[2]

This question expresses amazement: Have these people become so blind and deaf in opposing the truth that they regard the claim of this book being from God as a false claim? The implication is that if these people had any trace of truth and justice in them they would never have stated this. Yet they have become blind and deaf in their frenzy of opposing the Prophet (sws).

Consider the next the words: بَلْ هُوَ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَّبِّكَ. The above cited accusation has been answered by the Qur'ān in various aspects, the details of which can be looked up in the previous *sūrahs*. Here, instead of giving a detailed answer, the claim has been stressed with a severe threat. This stress is evident here from two aspects. One, that it is the very truth which means that the ancestral religion to which these people adhere is totally baseless and false; the true religion is the one this book is inviting them to. Second, these people should not think that this book is being falsely ascribed to God; it is, in fact, from God. If these people keep denying it, they will bear its consequences.

The words لِتُنْذِرَ قَوْمًا مَّآ اَتٰىهُمْ مِّنْ نَّذِيْرٍ مِّنْ قَبْلِكَ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَهْتَدُوْنَ express the objective for which this book has been revealed in such an elaborate manner by God: the Prophet (sws) may warn these people – of their fate in this world and the situation they will have to face in the Hereafter – to whom no warner has yet come before him. Here the word قَوْمٌ refers to the Arabs to whom no prophet came after Ishmael

2. Do they say: "He has fabricated it himself and ascribed it to God?" In fact, it is the truth from your Lord so that you may warn a people to whom no warner came before you that they may be rightly guided.

(sws). These words also express the great favour God has done to the unlettered Arabs by revealing this Book. They should duly value and honour this great favour.

These words at the same time also have a ring of warning in them: when the Almighty sends a warner to a nation, then the fate of that nation is judged. If even after that it does not mend its ways, then after giving a specific respite it is necessarily destroyed by the Almighty. I have explained this established practice of God at various places in this exegesis.

اَللّٰهُ الَّذِیْ خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ الْاَرْضَ وَ مَا بَیْنَهُمَا فِیْ سِتَّةِ اَیَّامٍ ثُمَّ اسْتَوٰی عَلَی الْعَرْشِ ؕ مَا لَكُمْ مِّنْ دُوْنِهٖ مِنْ وَّلِیٍّ وَّ لَا شَفِیْعٍ ؕ اَفَلَا تَتَذَكَّرُوْنَ ۝[3]

In the previous verse, it has been stated that the real purpose of this Book's revelation and that of Muḥammad's (sws) prophethood is warning people of the Hereafter. This verse provides details of this warning. There are two specific contents that constitute this warning: the beliefs of monotheism and hereafter. In the first place, the Qur'ān warns people of spending their lives while relying on false supports and hypothetical deities; the one and only God is the sole creator and administrator of this universe. Every person will ultimately return to Him and be held accountable before Him. For this reason, it is obligatory on everyone to thank and worship Him alone.

In the second place, the Qur'ān warns people of the Hereafter: it is certain to come. Finally, every person will come to God only. At that time, the wrongdoers will confess their crimes and request God to give them a chance to go back into the previous world so that they could lead their lives by accepting faith and by doing righteous deeds. However, there will be no opportunity for such requests and pleadings to be entertained there.

In the verse under discussion and in the next few ones, monotheism is discussed. After this, the Hereafter and what will befall there is discussed.

In the words اَللّٰهُ الَّذِیْ خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ الْاَرْضَ وَ مَا بَیْنَهُمَا فِیْ سِتَّةِ اَیَّامٍ ثُمَّ اسْتَوٰی عَلَی الْعَرْشِ

3. It was God who created the heavens and the earth and all that lies between them in six days, and then ascended the throne. You have no guardian or intercessor besides Him. Will you not take heed?

the days referred to are the days of God and it is clarified further down that a day of God equals one thousand human years. For this reason, six days actually refer to six phases. This, in fact, means that the creation of the heavens and the earth and what lies between them is not an accidental happening; in fact, God has created them in a very gradual and elaborate manner. This gradual and elaborate manner evidences the fact that this world has a purpose and wisdom behind it: it has not been made for entertainment.

The words ثُمَّ اسْتَوٰى عَلَى الْعَرْشِ indicate that after making this world God did not detach Himself from its affairs. He is directly controlling and administering its affairs after ascending its throne. This is actually a refutation of the view of the Idolaters that after creating this world He consigned its management and control to some favoured ones and Himself became aloof to them. The false notion on which this view is based has already been explained at an appropriate place of this exegesis.

The words مَا لَكُمْ مِّنْ دُوْنِهٖ مِنْ وَّلِيٍّ وَّلَا شَفِيْعٍ point to the necessary consequence of what is stated above: when everything is directly controlled by Him, then every one will have to be gathered before Him one day. He will then decide between all affairs. At that time neither will a person be able to become a supporter nor a helper of another person. No one will be able to intercede for anyone against God. The word دُوْن means both "except" and "in opposition to." Here it is used in the latter sense and hence appropriate both for وَّلِيٍّ (gaurdian) and شَفِيْعٍ (intercessor)

Since all these consequences are based on established facts acknowledged by the addressees, they are warned as to why they do they not pay heed to such clear matters.

يُدَبِّرُ الْاَمْرَ مِنَ السَّمَآءِ اِلَى الْاَرْضِ ثُمَّ يَعْرُجُ اِلَيْهِ فِيْ يَوْمٍ كَانَ مِقْدَارُهٗٓ اَلْفَ سَنَةٍ مِّمَّا تَعُدُّوْنَ ۝ ذٰلِكَ عٰلِمُ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ الْعَزِيْزُ الرَّحِيْمُ ۝[4]

The verse states that all affairs of this world from the heavens to the earth are under God's control. This is actually a refutation of a

4. He governs all affairs from the heavens to the earth. Then all these affairs return to Him in a day which is equivalent to a thousand years by your reckoning. He knows the unknown and the manifest. He is the Mighty One, the Ever Merciful.

false notion of the Idolaters that the earth is a far off area of this universe and that is why God has confined His governance to the heavens and has consigned the matters of the earth to some of His workers. It is about such people that at some places in the Qur'ān the question is raised: are there separate gods for the earth and the heavens; what a foolish inference they make?

The words ثُمَّ يَعْرُجُ اِلَيْهِ state that all affairs not only originate from God but also return to Him. The expression يَعْرُجُ اِلَيْهِ here means "to refer." The implication is that after giving the directives He does not remain aloof; everything is presented back to Him and He is fully aware if His workers and the implementers of His will have discharged their duties or not and in what manner.

People have generally considered the words فِيْ يَوْمٍ كَانَ مِقْدَارُهٗٓ اَلْفَ سَنَةٍ مِّمَّا تَعُدُّوْنَ to refer to the Day of Judgement and they think that it is a reference to the fact that that on this day the records of a person's deeds are to be presented before Him. They contend that the Day of Judgement would be very severe and it is to metaphorically express its severity that it would be of the span of a thousand years. In my view, this opinion is not correct. In Sūrah Ḥajj, precisely this subject is brought up in the following words:

إِنَّ يَوْمًا عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ كَأَلْفِ سَنَةٍ مِمَّا تَعُدُّونَ (٢٢: ٤٧)

And one day of your Lord is of the measure of your thousand years. (22:47)

This verse has come in response to the people's claim to hasten the punishment: when they are warned of the punishment they would say that they have been hearing this warning since a long time but it has not come. They would further say: if it has to come, why does it not come? In response to this, it is said that people must not judge God's words with their own standards and measures. Their days consist of twenty four hours and thus even a span of a few years seems very long to them; however, one of God's days is equivalent to their one thousand years, and His plans and projects are made while keeping this span in consideration. They become anxious while taking into account the measure of their days. It seems odd to them that a certain time period passes and the event that is claimed to happen does not

happen. They infer from this that the threat was a bluff. The fact is that as per the measure of God maybe even a second might not have elapsed.

It is in this context that the verse under discussion occurs. The implication is that all planning is in the hands of God. Directives originate from Him and then return to Him as well. However, this origin and return is with regard to the measure of God's days. For this reason, neither can every person be aware of their consequences nor can every person understand the wisdom behind them. The right attitude for people in this regard is that they should not show haste in the matters of God. In fact, they should show patience and wait for them to materialize.

The words ذٰلِكَ عٰلِمُ الْغَيْبِ وَ الشَّهَادَةِ الْعَزِيْزُ الرَّحِيْمُ state that it is only the powerful and merciful God Who is aware of the known and the unknown. No one else has the status to know all the secrets of the universe. He is aware of all the known and the unknown and is also powerful and merciful. Hence people should trust Him and behave positively in this regard.

It is possible that a question arise in the mind of someone that in Sūraj al-Ma'ārij, this topic is discussed in the following words:

تَعْرُجُ الْمَلَآئِكَةُ وَالرُّوحُ إِلَيْهِ فِي يَوْمٍ كَانَ مِقْدَارُهُ خَمْسِينَ أَلْفَ سَنَةٍ (٧٠: ٤)

The angels and Gabriel Spirit ascend towards Him in a day the measure of which is fifty thousand years. (70:4)

There seems to be an apparent contradiction between the above cited verse and the one under discussion. However, in reality, there is no contradiction between the two. This difference is based on difference between the size of the orbits. For this reason, various planets and stars have days of different duration. What also needs our attention is that in the verse under discussion presenting of matters before God is under discussion while in Sūrah al-Ma'ārij, the direct appearance of the angels and Gabriel before God is mentioned. It is very much possible that matters are presented to God in a day whose measure is a thousand earth years and angels and Gabriel directly appear before God on day that is equivalent to fifty thousand earth years. These matters relate to the realm of the unknown (*ghayb*).

Nothing can be said about them with certainty. However, this much is evident that there is no contradiction between the two verses. Readers are advised to look up what I have written regarding this issue in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Ḥajj. God willing, I will explain some of its aspects in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Ma'ārij as well.

الَّذِیْٓ اَحْسَنَ كُلَّ شَیْءٍ خَلَقَهٗ وَ بَدَاَ خَلْقَ الْاِنْسَانِ مِنْ طِیْنٍ ۚ﴿۷﴾ ثُمَّ جَعَلَ نَسْلَهٗ مِنْ سُلٰلَةٍ مِّنْ مَّآءٍ مَّهِیْنٍ ۚ﴿۸﴾ ثُمَّ سَوّٰىهُ وَنَفَخَ فِیْهِ مِنْ رُّوْحِهٖ وَجَعَلَ لَكُمُ السَّمْعَ وَالْاَبْصَارَ وَالْاَفْـِٕدَةَ ؕ قَلِیْلًا مَّا تَشْكُرُوْنَ ﴿۹﴾[5]

The attributes of God mentioned in the previous verse – as the one who is aware of the seen and the unseen and who is powerful and merciful – serve to form a prelude to sounding a warning about the Hereafter. This verse takes up this warning by stating that it is God Who has made everything in a grand manner. In other words, whatever He has created bears testimony to His power, wisdom, providence and profound knowledge. If a person reflects on the smallest of things created by God, he is astounded by the tremendous creativity of the Creator. He spontaneously cries out: فَتَبٰرَكَ اللّٰهُ اَحْسَنُ الْخٰلِقِیْنَ (۲۳: ۱٤) (Blessed is God, the best of creators, (23:14)). It is from here that a person comes to realize that how can one think of a being who is so powerful, so wise, so discerning, so merciful and so gracious that He has created this huge universe without a purpose. Hence it is essential that a day come in which he distinguishes between truth and falsehood and then reward those who acknowledged their obligation to His favours and punish those who spent this life in a careless fashion. These latter type of people were the ones who neither deliberated on the wisdom of God nor gave importance to others who deliberated on it.

Consider next the part: وَبَدَاَ خَلْقَ الْاِنْسَانِ مِنْ طِیْنٍ. Earlier it was said that whatever God made, He made it in a sound manner. To substantiate this claim, instead of presenting evidence from the external word, man's creation is presented as evidence. People do not need to go far

5. He who excelled in whatever He created. He began creating man with clay. Then carried forth his offspring from the essence of a trivial fluid. Then He perfected him and breathed His spirit into him and made for you ears, eyes and hearts – yet you are seldom grateful.

away. They only need to reflect on their own phases of creation and see the grandeur of God's power, wisdom and providence in it. It is stated that this man who now shows so much conceit on his abilities was not created in the beginning by God from some expensive substance. In fact, he was created from clay. His structure was fashioned from clay and from this clay signs of life appeared in it. He should behold how his Creator's power and wisdom transformed this lump of clay into a majestic creation.

The words ثُمَّ جَعَلَ نَسْلَهٗ مِنْ سُلٰلَةٍ مِّنْ مَّآءٍ مَّهِيْنٍ point to the second phase of man's creation: in this phase his progeny came into being through the essence of a trivial and impure fluid instead of being created from clay.

Consider next the words: ثُمَّ سَوّٰىهُ وَ نَفَخَ فِيْهِ مِنْ رُّوْحِهٖ وَ جَعَلَ لَكُمُ السَّمْعَ وَ الْاَبْصَارَ وَ الْاَفْـِٕدَةَ. The word تسوية means to perfect something and give it its final touches, as has been explained at an appropriate place. It signifies the same thing as the one signified in the terminology of art by the term "finishing touch." The implication is that in this third phase, He gave finishing touches to this man made of clay and breathed His spirit into Him. After this, his faculties of sight, hearing and cognition appeared in him which make him distinct from other life forms.

In the words نَفَخَ فِيْهِ مِنْ رُّوْحِهٖ the word رُوْح implies the divine spirit. With this divine spirit, a person also has a divine spark in him and it is as a result of this divine spark that his sight, hearing and cognition became so radiant that he came to be called the best of creations (*ashraf al-makhlūqāt*). If he is deprived of this radiance, then his inner self will be engulfed in the same darkness as that of the beasts. Beasts also have eyes, ears and hearts; however, they are deprived of the divine spark. For this reason, their eyes, ears and hearts do not have the abilities which those of human beings have. It may also be kept in consideration here, that it falls under man's will and intention to sustain, increase or decrease this spark. Those who duly value it and fulfill its rights are able to increase it and it becomes stronger and stronger in them. Those who do not do so will find it diminishing in them until it is totally extinguished.

The ascription in مِنْ رُّوْحِهٖ is meant to specify that the spirit is from God and in fact from among the blessings of God. It does not mean that it is something part of God. It was deemed necessary to state this

because this is one of the major reasons for the deviant philosophy of *waḥdat al-wujūd* to come into being.

Also evident from this verse is that before his *taswiyah* (final touches) and *nafkh-i rūḥ* (breathing of spirit into him), a phase did pass on man when he was uncouth like animals and devoid of intellect and insight. After this phase, *taswiyah* perfected his external self and *nafkh-i rūḥ* his internal one.

The words قَلِيْلًا مَّا تَشْكُرُوْنَ imply that man should reflect on all these stages of his creation – how the Almighty began creating him and how far He took him. It was only befitting that every part of his body express its gratitude to God's favours and providence, and that he should have spent all his abilities and gifts to please God. Yet, very few of these people are grateful to Him.

وَقَالُوْٓا ءَاِذَا ضَلَلْنَا فِي الْاَرْضِ ءَاِنَّا لَفِيْ خَلْقٍ جَدِيْدٍ ۭ بَلْ هُمْ بِلِقَاۗئِ رَبِّهِمْ كٰفِرُوْنَ ۝[6]

The implication of the verse is that the Almighty had blessed man with the faculties of sight, hearing and intellect for a certain reason: he should use them to witness the power, wisdom, mercy and providence of God and reach the conclusion that the Almighty has not created this world without a purpose; hence, it is essential that a day come when each person is held accountable for his deeds before the Almighty and be rewarded or punished. On the contrary, such is the misguided intellect of man that when he is warned of the Hereafter, then in spite of witnessing so many signs of God's power, he makes fun and sarcastically asks the question: after we shall decay into mud, will we be re-created?

The words بَلْ هُمْ بِلِقَاۗئِ رَبِّهِمْ كٰفِرُوْنَ imply that all these statements are lame excuses. How can they be so naïve as to doubt God in re-creating them when they have witnessed so many signs of His power within their own selves as well as around them? The fact is that these people are not willing to accept the fact they will one day be brought forth before God and be held accountable for their deeds. Accepting this weighs down heavily upon them. So in order to evade it they are fabricating all sorts of doubts and reservations. It may be kept in

6. And they say: "Once We are lost into the earth, shall we be created again?" In fact, these people deny meeting their Lord.

mind that at times, a person wants to negate something else but uses another thing as an excuse to negate it. The reason is that he does not find any room for directly negating. Similar was the case of the Idolaters of Arabia. They believed in God and hence could not explicitly deny that they will not be brought before God; however, they were also not willing to accept the heavy responsibilities imposed on them as a consequence of believing in Him. So, in order to evade them, in the first place they would try to raise such doubts regarding the Hereafter as the one just discussed and if they were ultimately led to accept the Hereafter, they would invent deities and intercessors who would save them from its consequences.

قُلْ يَتَوَفّٰىكُمْ مَّلَكُ الْمَوْتِ الَّذِيْ وُكِّلَ بِكُمْ ثُمَّ اِلٰى رَبِّكُمْ تُرْجَعُوْنَ ﴿١١﴾ [7]

This verse is an answer to the two questions raised earlier: whoever dies, his soul is claimed by an angel who is deputed by God on every person. Hence, even after death every person remains in the sight of God and His deputed angels. Whenever God wants, He will raise each person to life and the person will be brought before God in the custody of His deputed angels.

The words ثُمَّ اِلٰى رَبِّكُمْ تُرْجَعُوْنَ imply that no one should remain in the misconception that when he dies he will be brought forth to his alleged deities and intercessors. On that day, deities and intercessors will not even exist. Everyone will be brought before the one and only God and He will pass His judgement on them.

وَلَوْ تَرٰٓى اِذِ الْمُجْرِمُوْنَ نَاكِسُوْا رُءُوْسِهِمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ ۭ رَبَّنَآ اَبْصَرْنَا وَسَمِعْنَا فَارْجِعْنَا نَعْمَلْ صَالِحًا اِنَّا مُوْقِنُوْنَ ﴿١٢﴾ [8]

The words وَلَوْ تَرٰٓى can be addressed to the Prophet (sws) and also to the general masses. In the first case, the verse would sound assurance and in the second a warning. If the first case is chosen, the meaning would be that today these people are showing arrogance before the

7. Say: "The angel of death deputed to you claims your souls. Then to your Lord shall you be returned."

8. And would that you were able to see these wrongdoers when they bowing their heads before their Lord would confess: "Lord! We have seen and we have heard; send us back so that we can do good deeds. Now we are convinced."

Prophet (sws) and haughtily deny the Hereafter and being brought forth before God; however, if the Prophet (sws) would have been able to see when all the wrong-doers would be brought before God with their heads bent down, then __. The answer to this conditional clause is suppressed and there is much eloquence in this suppression. The implication is that the Prophet (sws) would have seen their helplessness at that time which he cannot even imagine today.

The words رَبَّنَآ اَبۡصَرۡنَا وَ سَمِعۡنَا فَارۡجِعۡنَا نَعۡمَلۡ صَالِحًا اِنَّا مُوۡقِنُوۡنَ imply that at that time everyone of these wrongdoers will confess that they fully see and accept and that they may be allowed to return so that they can do pious deeds and that now they are fully convinced of everything.

وَلَوۡ شِئۡنَا لَاٰتَيۡنَا كُلَّ نَفۡسٍ هُدٰىهَا وَلٰكِنۡ حَقَّ الۡقَوۡلُ مِنِّىۡ لَاَمۡلَـئَنَّ جَهَنَّمَ مِنَ الۡجِنَّةِ وَ النَّاسِ اَجۡمَعِيۡنَ ﴿۱۳﴾[9]

This verse is an answer to their confession and request which shall be given to them forthwith: after witnessing all this, their acknowledgement and faith are of no use. Had God been pleased of professing faith in such compelling circumstances, He would have given faith and guidance to everyone at their birth. This was not difficult at all for Him. However, He did not do this; in fact, regarding guidance He gave a choice to people. The purpose was that He wanted to test people as to which of them profess faith after using their intellect and insight and which of them choose the path of Satan while following their desires.

The words وَ لٰكِنۡ حَقَّ الۡقَوۡلُ مِنِّىۡ لَاَمۡلَـئَنَّ جَهَنَّمَ مِنَ الۡجِنَّةِ وَ النَّاسِ اَجۡمَعِيۡنَ refer to the verdict of God which He declared before Satan in response to his challenge. This has been mentioned at many places in the Qur'ān. In Sūrah Ṣu'ad, the words are:

قَالَ فَبِعِزَّتِكَ لَاُغۡوِيَنَّهُمۡ اَجۡمَعِيۡنَ ﴿۸۲﴾ اِلَّا عِبَادَكَ مِنۡهُمُ الۡمُخۡلَصِيۡنَ ﴿۸۳﴾ قَالَ فَالۡحَقُّ ۬ وَالۡحَقَّ اَقُوۡلُ ﴿۸۴﴾ لَاَمۡلَـئَنَّ جَهَنَّمَ مِنۡكَ وَمِمَّنۡ تَبِعَكَ مِنۡهُمۡ اَجۡمَعِيۡنَ ﴿۸۵﴾

"I swear by Your glory and honour," said Satan, "that I will lead them all astray except your servants who you have selected." God replied: "This is the truth then and I speak nothing but the truth is

9. Had it been Our will, We could have given every soul its guidance. But My word shall be fulfilled: "I will surely fill Hell with jinn and humans all."

that I will surely fill Hell with you and all among human beings who are your followers." (38:82-85)

The reason for citing this statement would be to inform the wrongdoers that the time for apology has expired. The Almighty had already declared His verdict in response to Satan that he should lead astray whoever he can from among the progeny of Adam. The Almighty has granted man the free will to choose between God and Satan. This was his test in the life of the previous world. Now this stage has passed and time has come to face the consequences. Thus, today their fate has come before them and God's words about them have come true.

فَذُوْقُوْا بِمَا نَسِيْتُمْ لِقَآءَ يَوْمِكُمْ هٰذَا ۚ اِنَّا نَسِيْنٰكُمْ وَذُوْقُوْا عَذَابَ الْخُلْدِ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿١٤﴾[10]

As stated at another place in this exegesis, the word نسی also means "to ignore" and "to take no notice of something or someone." Here it is used in precisely this meaning. The implication is that no possibility of any question or request now remains. The way they have kept on ignoring this day, in a similar manner God has ignored them today. No request or pleading is now worthy of being accepted. They will now taste an eternal punishment because of their deeds. They should remember that this is no injustice that God has shown them. They have only reaped what they had sown all their life.

Section II: Verses (15-22)

The previous section of verses has outlined the reasons on account of which people were evading to profess faith in the Qur'ān. The succeeding verses depict what type of people are professing faith in it or will do so, and the status and reward they will get before God. Similarly, these verses also depict the fate in this world and in the next of those who are opposing it. Readers may now proceed to study these verses.

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10. So, taste the flavour of this that you kept in oblivion the gathering of this day. We too have ignored you, and you will now taste eternal punishment for what you did.

اِنَّمَا يُؤْمِنُ بِاٰيٰتِنَا الَّذِيْنَ اِذَا ذُكِّرُوْا بِهَا خَرُّوْا سُجَّدًا وَّ سَبَّحُوْا بِحَمْدِ رَبِّهِمْ وَ هُمْ لَا يَسْتَكْبِرُوْنَ ﴿١٥﴾
تَتَجَافٰى جُنُوْبُهُمْ عَنِ الْمَضَاجِعِ يَدْعُوْنَ رَبَّهُمْ خَوْفًا وَّ طَمَعًا ۫ وَّ مِمَّا رَزَقْنٰهُمْ يُنْفِقُوْنَ ﴿١٦﴾ فَلَا تَعْلَمُ نَفْسٌ
مَّاۤ اُخْفِيَ لَهُمْ مِّنْ قُرَّةِ اَعْيُنٍ ۚ جَزَآءًۢ بِمَا كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿١٧﴾ اَفَمَنْ كَانَ مُؤْمِنًا كَمَنْ كَانَ فَاسِقًا ؕ لَا يَسْتَوٗنَ
﴿١٨﴾ اَمَّا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَ عَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ فَلَهُمْ جَنّٰتُ الْمَاْوٰى ۬ نُزُلًۢا بِمَا كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿١٩﴾ وَ اَمَّا الَّذِيْنَ
فَسَقُوْا فَمَاْوٰىهُمُ النَّارُ ؕ كُلَّمَاۤ اَرَادُوْۤا اَنْ يَّخْرُجُوْا مِنْهَاۤ اُعِيْدُوْا فِيْهَا وَ قِيْلَ لَهُمْ ذُوْقُوْا عَذَابَ النَّارِ الَّذِيْ
كُنْتُمْ بِهٖ تُكَذِّبُوْنَ ﴿٢٠﴾ وَ لَنُذِيْقَنَّهُمْ مِّنَ الْعَذَابِ الْاَدْنٰى دُوْنَ الْعَذَابِ الْاَكْبَرِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُوْنَ ﴿٢١﴾ وَ مَنْ
اَظْلَمُ مِمَّنْ ذُكِّرَ بِاٰيٰتِ رَبِّهٖ ثُمَّ اَعْرَضَ عَنْهَا ؕ اِنَّا مِنَ الْمُجْرِمِيْنَ مُنْتَقِمُوْنَ ﴿٢٢﴾

Only those profess faith in Our revelations who, when reminded through them, fall down in prostration and glorify their Lord while praising Him and they are not arrogant. Their backs forsake their beds. They invoke their Lord in fear and hope and spend of what We have given them. So, no one knows the bliss of the eye that lies in store for them as a reward for their deeds. (15-17)

Can he, then, who is a believer be like a wrongdoer? Both cannot be equal. For those who have accepted faith and have done righteous deeds are orchards of pleasure in recompense for their deeds as their foremost feast. As for those who showed defiance, their abode is Hell. Whenever they try to escape from it, they shall be driven back into it, and shall be told: "Taste the torment of this Fire, which you continued to deny." (18-20)

And We will inflict on them the nearer torment besides the greater torment so that they may return to the right path. And who can be more unjust than those who pay no heed to the revelations of their Lord when they are reminded through them? We will surely take vengeance from such wrongdoers. (21-22)

Explanation

اِنَّمَا يُؤْمِنُ بِاٰيٰتِنَا الَّذِيْنَ اِذَا ذُكِّرُوْا بِهَا خَرُّوْا سُجَّدًا وَّ سَبَّحُوْا بِحَمْدِ رَبِّهِمْ وَ هُمْ لَا يَسْتَكْبِرُوْنَ ﴿١٥﴾[11]

This verse sounds an assurance to the Prophet (sws). The

11. Only those profess faith in Our revelations who, when reminded through them, fall down in prostration and glorify their Lord while praising Him and they are not arrogant.

implication is that he should not expect any good coming from people who in arrogance of their worldly superiority regard themselves to be greater than the truth; only those people will profess faith in the revelations of God who have humility and penitence in their hearts. Whenever they are reminded through them, instead of mutually quarrelling, they spontaneously fall down in prostration and glorify their Lord while exalting Him. In other words, those people will be influenced by these revelations whose hearts have not hardened. If there is any dust of negligence in such people, it is brushed away. They then adopt the truth in such a manner that they are able to access the farthest of frontiers in a very short time.

Consider next the words: سُجَّدًا وَّسَبَّحُوْا بِحَمْدِ رَبِّهِمْ. I have already stated at some place the benefit of mentioning تسبیح (glorification) and تحمید (exaltation) side by side. The former encompasses absolving God of bad attributes and the latter encompasses affirming good attributes in Him. True comprehension of God comes while keeping in consideration both these aspects. If a person does not keep any of them in mind, such misconceptions about God may arise in his mind that the existence of God or otherwise become equal to him.

The words وَ هُمْ لَا يَسْتَكْبِرُوْنَ state the bottom line: this ability has been engendered in these people because they are not arrogant. I have explained the essence of arrogance at another place. Its true meaning is to deny the truth. It is the source of all ailments. People who are afflicted with this fatal sickness are not willing to accept the most obvious of truths if they are against their desires and opinions. The consequence of this attitude is that God deprives them of the ability to accept the truth. Only those people are guided to accept the truth who regard the truth, whether big or small, to be above everything. Such are these people that when they encounter the truth from wherever it appears even if from the mouth of an enemy, they submit to it without any hesitation.

تَتَجَافٰى جُنُوْبُهُمْ عَنِ الْمَضَاجِعِ يَدْعُوْنَ رَبَّهُمْ خَوْفًا وَّطَمَعًا ۫ وَّمِمَّا رَزَقْنٰهُمْ يُنْفِقُوْنَ ﴿۱۶﴾[12]

Such is the persistent fear of the Hereafter and its accountability that

12. Their backs forsake their beds. They invoke their Lord in fear and hope and spend of what We have given them.

these people keep getting up at night. They forsake their slumber and comfort and invoke God and offer the prayer to please Him. They fear God and at the same time pin all their hopes in Him. And they spend for the cause of God from what God has blessed them with.

Two things are mentioned in this verse: the prayer and charity. After faith, it is these two things which are its foremost manifestations and the whole edifice of religion stands on them. I have discussed this issue at many places in this exegesis.

فَلَا تَعْلَمُ نَفْسٌ مَّآ أُخْفِيَ لَهُم مِّن قُرَّةِ أَعْيُنٍ ۚ جَزَآءًۢ بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٧﴾[13]

The verse states the reward of the night vigilance and charity of these people: no one can imagine in this world the bliss (literally: coolness) of the eyes God has concealed for them in the Hereafter. Those who are today laughing at the sacrifices of people for a world these people have never seen will be dumb-struck to behold God's blessings on them. The believers will be overjoyed on seeing that their sacrifices yielded dividends way beyond their expectations

The words جَزَآءًۢ بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ imply that whatever they will be rewarded with will be in lieu of their deeds. The Almighty will reward their efforts spanning a few days with an eternal kingdom and will tell them that this is the reward of their deeds. Even though what a person will get will be because of God's grace, yet God has called it the consequence of their deeds because the joy a person receives on his own feats is incomparable.

أَفَمَن كَانَ مُؤْمِنًا كَمَن كَانَ فَاسِقًا ۚ لَّا يَسْتَوُۥنَ ﴿١٨﴾[14]

This verse corroborates what has been said earlier: there should not be any doubt in what has been said. This is what is going to happen and should happen. If it does not happen, then it would mean that the Creator of this world regards the believers and the defiant to be equal, and that He will not differentiate between His obedient people and those who were rebellious. Thinking thus would negate the fact

13. So, no one knows the bliss of the eye that lies in store for them as a reward for their deeds.

14. Can he, then, who is a believer be like a wrongdoer? Both cannot be equal.

that this world has been created for a wise purpose and that its Creator is just, merciful and wise. Hence this notion is totally baseless. The believers and the defiant cannot be equal to one another in the eyes of God. Thus it is essential that a day come in which those loyal to God be rewarded for their loyalty, and those disloyal to Him be punished for their disloyalty.

اَمَّا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ فَلَهُمْ جَنّٰتُ الْمَاْوٰى ۭ نُزُلًۢا بِمَا كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿١٩﴾[15]

This verse states the details of the reward and punishment mentioned above: those who spend their lives while adhering to faith and doing righteous deeds will be rewarded with orchards of bliss. They will receive them as a reward of their deeds as the foremost gift they will be entertained with. The word نُزُل refers to the hospitality a guest receives as soon as he disembarks from his conveyance. Once guests pass through this initial welcome, they will be sent to Paradise. It is as if these orchards would be like the guest houses for the people of Paradise. Since they occur in the plural, it means that each dweller of Paradise will be granted separate orchards. It is evident from verse 15 of Sūrah Najm that جَنّٰتُ الْمَاْوٰى is near سِدْرَةُ الْمُنْتَهٰى (the farthest lote-tree). This lote-tree occurs at the meeting place of the realm of this world and that of the next. Hence if the جَنّٰتُ الْمَاْوٰى is found near it, then this is the most appropriate place for it. These are the events of the unknown world. Nothing can be stated about them with certainty. Whatever I have written has been written to explain the consequences of the word نُزُل. God willing, I will write more about جَنّٰتُ الْمَاْوٰى in the exegesis of Sūrah Najm.

وَاَمَّا الَّذِيْنَ فَسَقُوْا فَمَاْوٰىهُمُ النَّارُ ۭ كُلَّمَآ اَرَادُوْٓا اَنْ يَّخْرُجُوْا مِنْهَآ اُعِيْدُوْا فِيْهَا وَقِيْلَ لَهُمْ ذُوْقُوْا عَذَابَ النَّارِ الَّذِيْ كُنْتُمْ بِهٖ تُكَذِّبُوْنَ ﴿٢٠﴾[16]

After the reward of the believers has been mentioned, this verse states the punishment of the defiant and the wrongdoers. The verse

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15. For those who have accepted faith and have done righteous deeds are orchards of pleasure in recompense for their deeds as their foremost feast.

16. As for those who showed defiance, their abode is Hell. Whenever they try to escape from it, they shall be driven back into it, and shall be told: "Taste the torment of this Fire, which you continued to deny."

states that Hell will be their abode and they shall be shoved into it directly. It is evident from other places of the Qur'ān that the first hospitality they will receive is boiling water and the tree of Zaqqūm. They will try to escape from Hell; however, each time they try to do so, they will be pushed back into it and they shall be informed to not try to run away from this place; it is the very Hell and its punishment which they used to make fun of; now they should taste it.

وَلَنُذِيْقَنَّهُمْ مِّنَ الْعَذَابِ الْاَدْنٰى دُوْنَ الْعَذَابِ الْاَكْبَرِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُوْنَ ﴿٢١﴾[17]

The expression الْعَذَابِ الْاَدْنٰى (nearer torment) refers to the torment of this world. Its purpose is to remind and warn people. The verse also mentions the الْعَذَابِ الْاَكْبَرِ (the great torment) which the disbelievers will face in the Hereafter. However, before this great torment, the Almighty will also inflict these people with another torment. "These people" obviously refer to the Quraysh. Though what is being said here is in general terms yet their foremost addressees are the Quraysh. They are warned that they will be punished in this world also and the purpose would be to induce them to desist from their evil ways and return to righteousness. For the Quraysh, this الْعَذَابِ الْاَدْنٰى (nearer torment) began with the battle of Badr in which they were given the first jolt when their prominent leaders were killed. After that they were faced with similar bouts of humiliation one after the other until at the conquest of Makkah their power was totally quashed. The good people among them slowly accepted faith and the evil elements were gradually routed. Since their majority professed faith in Muḥammad (sws), no decisive punishment visited them the way it visited the previous nations. They were left to live after a warning as is evident from the words: لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُوْنَ (so that they may return).

وَمَنْ اَظْلَمُ مِمَّنْ ذُكِّرَ بِاٰيٰتِ رَبِّهٖ ثُمَّ اَعْرَضَ عَنْهَا ؕ اِنَّا مِنَ الْمُجْرِمِيْنَ مُنْتَقِمُوْنَ ﴿٢٢﴾[18]

This verse states the reason of the warning of punishment sounded

17. And We will inflict on them the nearer torment besides the greater torment so that they may return to the right path.

18. And who can be more unjust than those who pay no heed to the revelations of their Lord when they are reminded through them? We will surely take vengeance from such wrongdoers.

by the previous verse: why should God not punish such people? Who can be greater wrongdoers and unjust than those who are reminded by God's revelations and they show aversion to them. The greatest means of reminding and counseling them could have been the Book of God and His Messenger. Those who do not awake from their slumber after this final warning will not awake from any other means, as per the established practice of God. There is no doubt that these wrongdoers do not deserve any lenience and God will necessarily take revenge from them. It has been explained at many instances in this exegesis how the Almighty deals with a nation to which He sends a messenger. The verse under discussion should be understood in the light of this practice of God.

Section III: Verses (23-30)

Coming up are the closing verses of the *sūrah*. In the previous section, the Quraysh have been threatened that if they do not believe in this guidance revealed by God, they will necessarily face God's torment in this world as well as the next. In this section, this premise is substantiated through history, and glad tidings have been given to the Prophet (sws) and his companions that they will be ultimately successful if they remain steadfast. Readers may proceed to study these verses in the light of this background.

وَلَقَدْ اٰتَيْنَا مُوْسَى الْكِتٰبَ فَلَا تَكُنْ فِيْ مِرْيَةٍ مِّنْ لِّقَآئِهٖ وَجَعَلْنٰهُ هُدًى لِّبَنِيْٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ ﴿٢٣﴾ وَجَعَلْنَا
مِنْهُمْ اَئِمَّةً يَّهْدُوْنَ بِاَمْرِنَا لَمَّا صَبَرُوْا ؕ وَكَانُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا يُوْقِنُوْنَ ﴿٢٤﴾ اِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ يَفْصِلُ بَيْنَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ
فِيْمَا كَانُوْا فِيْهِ يَخْتَلِفُوْنَ ﴿٢٥﴾ اَوَلَمْ يَهْدِ لَهُمْ كَمْ اَهْلَكْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ مِّنَ الْقُرُوْنِ يَمْشُوْنَ فِيْ مَسٰكِنِهِمْ ؕ اِنَّ فِيْ
ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيٰتٍ ؕ اَفَلَا يَسْمَعُوْنَ ﴿٢٦﴾ اَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا اَنَّا نَسُوْقُ الْمَآءَ اِلَى الْاَرْضِ الْجُرُزِ فَنُخْرِجُ بِهٖ زَرْعًا تَاْكُلُ مِنْهُ
اَنْعَامُهُمْ وَاَنْفُسُهُمْ ؕ اَفَلَا يُبْصِرُوْنَ ﴿٢٧﴾ وَيَقُوْلُوْنَ مَتٰى هٰذَا الْفَتْحُ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ صٰدِقِيْنَ ﴿٢٨﴾ قُلْ يَوْمَ الْفَتْحِ لَا
يَنْفَعُ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْٓا اِيْمَانُهُمْ وَلَا هُمْ يُنْظَرُوْنَ ﴿٢٩﴾ فَاَعْرِضْ عَنْهُمْ وَانْتَظِرْ اِنَّهُمْ مُّنْتَظِرُوْنَ ﴿٣٠﴾

And We had also given the Book to Moses that you should never be afflicted with any doubt regarding that promised day. And We made it a guidance for the Israelites. And when they showed perseverance, We appointed leaders from among them who would

guide people at Our behest. And they had conviction in Our revelations. Indeed, it is your Lord who will settle matters between them in which they have continued to differ. (23-25)

Did this not become a source of guidance for them that how many nations We have destroyed before whose settlements they would walk about? Surely in this there are many signs. So, do not these people listen and understand? (26)

Do they not heed how We drive water-laden clouds to dry land. Thus We bring forth crops with which their cattle eat and they themselves too. So, do they not see? (27)

And they ask: "When will this Day of Judgement be, if what you say be true? Say: "On the Day of Judgement, faith shall not be of benefit to those who would have disbelieved nor shall they be given respite after this. Therefore, ignore them and wait and they too are waiting." (30)

Explanation

وَلَقَدْ اٰتَيْنَا مُوْسَى الْكِتٰبَ فَلَا تَكُنْ فِيْ مِرْيَةٍ مِّنْ لِّقَآئِهٖ وَجَعَلْنٰهُ هُدًى لِّبَنِيْٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ ﴿٢٣﴾ وَجَعَلْنَا مِنْهُمْ اَئِمَّةً يَّهْدُوْنَ بِاَمْرِنَا لَمَّا صَبَرُوْا ؕ وَكَانُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا يُوْقِنُوْنَ ﴿٢٤﴾[19]

The word الْكِتٰب (the book) refers to the Torah. The opinion of those who regard it to refer it to the generic noun "Book" is against what is specified by the Qur'ān. The antecedent of the pronoun in جَعَلْنٰهُ is nothing but this Book and it is defined as one which God has made guidance for the Israelites. This definition itself determines that the word is not in its generic meaning; it refers to the Torah.

It is evident from the context that the antecedent of the pronoun in لِّقَآئِهٖ is not الْكِتٰب but the day of revenge and punishment with which the Quraysh have been threatened earlier in verses 21-23. The implication is that just as God gave Moses a Book and punished its rejecters in this world and will punish them in the Hereafter, in a similar manner those who reject the Book revealed through

19. And We had also given the Book to Moses that you should never be inflicted with any doubt regarding that promised day. And We made it a guide for the Israelites. And when they showed perseverance, We appointed leaders from among them who would guide people at Our behest. And they had conviction in Our revelations.

Muḥammad (sws) shall also be punished by God in this world as well as the Hereafter.

The words فَلَا تَكُنْ فِيْ مِرْيَةٍ مِّنْ لِّقَآئِهٖ imply that people should not be in any doubt about the day of revenge and punishment. It is certain to arrive. Though the words of this sentence apparently seem to address the Prophet (sws), yet the threat in them is directed towards the opponents and disbelievers. It is as if they have been indirectly addressed.

I have explained at several instances in this exegesis that the necessary consequence of sending a messenger to a nation and the revelation of a Book is that those who deny them are punished both in this world and the next

In Sūrah Furqān, it is stated concisely but comprehensively thus:

وَلَقَدْ اٰتَيْنَا مُوْسَى الْكِتٰبَ وَجَعَلْنَا مَعَهٗٓ اَخَاهُ هٰرُوْنَ وَزِيْرًا ﴿٣٥﴾ فَقُلْنَا اذْهَبَآ اِلَى الْقَوْمِ الَّذِيْنَ كَذَّبُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا ۭ فَدَمَّرْنٰهُمْ تَدْمِيْرًا ﴿٣٦﴾ (٢٥: ٣٥-٣٦)

And We gave Moses the Book and made Aaron his brother his helper and directed them: "Both of you go to the people who have denied Our signs." Thus We totally routed them. (25:35-36)

In Sūrah Mu'minūn, the words are:

فَكَذَّبُوْهُمَا فَكَانُوْا مِنَ الْمُهْلَكِيْنَ ﴿٤٨﴾ وَلَقَدْ اٰتَيْنَا مُوْسَى الْكِتٰبَ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَهْتَدُوْنَ ﴿٤٩﴾ (٢٣: ٤٨-٤٩)

Hence they rejected both [Moses and Aaron] and ended up among those destroyed. And We gave Moses the Book so that they become among the guided. (23:48-49)

As a general principle regarding all messengers, this practice is stated in the following words:

وَلَقَدْ اَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ رُسُلًا اِلٰى قَوْمِهِمْ فَجَآءُوْهُمْ بِالْبَيِّنٰتِ فَانْتَقَمْنَا مِنَ الَّذِيْنَ اَجْرَمُوْا ۭ وَكَانَ حَقًّا عَلَيْنَا نَصْرُ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿٤٧﴾ (٣٠: ٤٧)

And before you also We sent messengers to their nations. So they brought to them clear signs. Finally We took revenge from those who were wrongdoers and helping the believers is mandatory on Us. (31:47)

If the verse under discussion is reflected upon in the light of these parallel verses, every part of it will be fully explained. Since our exegetes do not interpret this verse in the light of its context and other parallel verses, they had to face a lot of difficult in understanding it.

The words وَجَعَلْنٰهُ هُدًى لِّبَنِيْٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ imply that those who rejected the Torah ended up with a fate that is destined for rejecters of divine books. However, because the Israelites accept it, God made it a scripture of guidance for them. The unfortunate rejected it and those who duly valued it received guidance from it. Readers are advised to look up the verses of Sūrah Mu'minūn (23:48-49) cited above.

The words وَجَعَلْنَا مِنْهُمْ اَئِمَّةً يَّهْدُوْنَ بِاَمْرِنَا لَمَّا صَبَرُوْا express the consequence of being given the Book: it was because of this Book that the Almighty made the Israelites the leaders of nations and sent such guides in them who would show the way to people at the behest of God.

It is evident from this that leadership is the essential consequence of receiving God's Book. As long as a nation – on which God confers His Book – adheres to it, it remains the leader of nations and its enemies are routed and humiliated before it.

The words يَّهْدُوْنَ بِاَمْرِنَا لَمَّا صَبَرُوْا state the conditions and features of this world leadership: since the Israelites were conferred with the Book of God, they would guide people according to it. It was not that in spite of possessing divine guidance they would follow the ways of Satan.

The phrase لَمَّا صَبَرُوْا alludes to the pillar on which rests the foundation of the *sharī'ah*. The Israelites were only able to guide people according to God's *sharī'ah* as long as they themselves were able to strongly adhere to the *sharī'ah* and persevere on it by disregarding any fear or greed.

The words وَكَانُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا يُوْقِنُوْنَ refer to the foundation of their patience: they had full certitude in the revelations of God and they fully believed in reward and punishment. It was because of this that they passed their test of patience.

If we reflect on these verses, it will become clear that they contain glad tidings for the Muslims and also a reminder of some great future responsibilities. At the same time, they are also a critique on the Jews

of those times as to what responsibility they were bestowed with and what they actually made of it.

إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ يَفْصِلُ بَيْنَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ فِيمَا كَانُوا فِيهِ يَخْتَلِفُونَ ﴿٢٥﴾ [20]

This verse states that after this world ends, their matter will be presented in the court of God in the Hereafter and He will pass His final judgement about all things in which they differed. This obviously means that these people will actually suffer punishment because of what they had been doing.

أَوَلَمْ يَهْدِ لَهُمْ كَمْ أَهْلَكْنَا مِن قَبْلِهِم مِّنَ الْقُرُونِ يَمْشُونَ فِي مَسٰكِنِهِمْ ۚ إِنَّ فِي ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيٰتٍ ۖ أَفَلَا يَسْمَعُونَ ﴿٢٦﴾ [21]

After the fate of Moses' opponents is specially referred to earlier, this verse further refers to the fate of the previous nations in a concise manner. The fate of all these people who denied their respective messengers – and in whose ruins the Quraysh walk about – was not sufficient for their guidance. This is a reference to the ʻĀd, the Thamūd and the people of Lot etc whose accounts have been mentioned in the previous *sūrahs*. In their trade journeys, the Quraysh would frequent on the ruined settlements of these nations. It is evident from the style of the words that alas why do they not learn a lesson from the history of their country? Why do they want that they too be afflicted like the previous nations?

The words إِنَّ فِي ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيٰتٍ imply that there are signs in these accounts of nations. If the Quraysh have any sense, they should benefit from these signs.

– The first sign in these accounts is that if people who are blessed with God's Book and are also reminded by Him through His messenger show aversion to it, they are regarded as wrongdoers and are punished by God.

– The second sign is that God punishes such wrongdoers in this

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20. Indeed, it is your Lord who will settle matters between them in which they have continued to differ.

21. Did this not become a source of guidance for them that how many generations We have destroyed before whose settlements they would walk about? Surely in this there are many signs. So, do not these people listen and understand?

world and after this also in the Hereafter.

– The third sign is that once the wrongdoers are punished, those who with full perseverance side by the truth are installed on the position of leadership by the Almighty.

The words اَفَلَا يَسْمَعُوْنَ allude to the fact that do these people not listen to the tales of these nations? The implication is that merely to remind and instruct these people has the Qur'ān mentioned the accounts of these nations with all the details encompassing the lessons they contain. If they have still shut their ears, then only sorrow can be expressed on their misfortune. The word "listen" means to understand and seek a lesson. This is because true listening is precisely this. In other words, the verb here implies the reality for which it stands.

اَوَ لَمْ يَرَوْا اَنَّا نَسُوْقُ الْمَآءَ اِلَى الْاَرْضِ الْجُرُزِ فَنُخْرِجُ بِهٖ زَرْعًا تَاْكُلُ مِنْهُ اَنْعَامُهُمْ وَ اَنْفُسُهُمْ ؕ اَفَلَا يُبْصِرُوْنَ ﴿۲۷﴾ العلقة 22

Since the word الْمَآءَ refers to water-laden clouds, use of the verb نَسُوْقُ is apt for it. The expression الْاَرْضِ الْجُرُزِ means barren and dry land.

In the previous verses, attention is directed to the historical incidents and events which bear witness to God's law of reward and punishment in this world. Attention is now directed to the Hereafter: it should not be regarded as an improbable event; it is bound to happen and when it comes the Almighty will pass His final judgement. The verse asks people as to why they not observe the power and providence of God: He drives water-laden clouds to dry lands and then through it brings out various types of crops which are of benefit to people as well as to their animals.

The words اَفَلَا يُبْصِرُوْنَ rebuke these people on showing lack of sight. The earlier verse has already rebuked them on not listening. In other words, what is being said is that just as their ears have become deaf, their eyes too have lost their vision. Every now and then, they behold the earth dead and then given life again but still are afflicted with the doubt that God is not powerful enough to re-create them.

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22. Do they not heed how We drive water-laden clouds. Thus We bring forth crops with which their cattle eat and they themselves too. So, do they not see?

Deliberation on the verse under discussion shows that the Almighty has specially highlighted His power and providence. Both these attributes present a very clear evidence on the need and possibility of the Hereafter. This has been explained in the exegesis of previous *sūrahs*.

وَيَقُوْلُوْنَ مَتٰى هٰذَا الْفَتْحُ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ صٰدِقِيْنَ ﴿٢٨﴾[23]

The verse implies that such is the lack of insight and foolishness of these people that when their attention is directed to prominent historical signs and those found in the world around them, they mockingly ask: if such a day is really to come and the Prophet (sws) and his companions are truthful in their claim, why does it not arrive? The implication is that they are not prepared to accept anything on the basis of reasoning; they will only believe when they see it with their eyes.

قُلْ يَوْمَ الْفَتْحِ لَا يَنْفَعُ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْٓا اِيْمَانُهُمْ وَلَا هُمْ يُنْظَرُوْنَ ﴿٢٩﴾[24]

This verse states the answer to their demand: if they want to believe in the Day of Judgment after seeing it, the Prophet (sws) should tell them that such a belief will be of no avail to them. Once it comes, no one will be given any respite even to reform and repent in order to atone for his blemishes. The expression يَوْمَ الْفَتْحِ refers to the day on which the verdict shall be delivered. God's Messengers have informed their nations of two punishments: the punishment of the Hereafter and the punishment of the Herein. The latter comes in the form of a decisive divine torment as a consequence of a nation denying its respective messenger. The practice of God delineated by this verse relates to both these situations: just as professing faith after the advent of the Day of Judgement is of no avail, similarly after the advent of the decisive divine torment professing belief is of no avail. The reason for this is that only that faith is acceptable to God which

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23. And they ask: "When will this Day of Judgement be, if what you say be true?

24. Say: "On the Day of Judgement, their faith shall not be of benefit to those who would have disbelieved nor shall they be given respite after this."

is professed in the guidance of intellect while exercising freedom. Professing faith under compulsion has no weight before Him. Had such faith been of any benefit before Him, everyone would have been created by Him on faith – as is stated at another instance. This would not have been the slightest difficult for Him. But He never did this.

فَاَعۡرِضۡ عَنۡهُمۡ وَانۡتَظِرۡ اِنَّهُمۡ مُّنۡتَظِرُوۡنَ ﴿۳۰﴾[25]

Here at the end, the Prophet (sws) is directed that if these people are adamant on observing the Day of Judgement, there is no use discussing things any further with them. He should leave them to themselves. He also should wait for this day the way they are waiting. The day will arrive at its time appointed by God.

On these lines, the exegesis of this *sūrah* comes to an end. فللہ الحمد و المنۃ (gratitude to God and it is His favour).

9 am, Saturday
17th August 1974
Raḥmānābād

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25. Therefore, ignore them and wait and they too are waiting."